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Manchester Book Sales Fall Short

NEW YORK (AP)—Many book dealers across the country reported yesterday that sales of William Manchester's "The Death of a President" have fallen far short of expectations.

The controversial account of John F. Kennedy's assassination landed on retail shelves early last month in a blaze of sensational publicity. Trade sources thought the book might become the runaway best-seller of the 20th century.

But a national survey indicated things haven't worked out that way.

The publisher, Harper & Row, said the initial printing of 600,000 copies was sold out to retailers but acknowledged that thousands of the books have been returned by dealers. Firm plans for a second printing have yet to be made.

"We'll have to print more, but as yet we don't know how many or how soon," said Frank Scioscia, Harper & Row's sales manager.

Many book retailers complained that discount stores had skimmed off the cream by cutting the price of the Manchester book from the publisher-recommended \$10 to as little as \$5.

A few dealers reported that the book was selling about as well as they had expected. They said it probably would enjoy a slow but steady demand for years.

More typically, Stuart Brent, a major independent retailer in Chicago, said: "The book is dead and has been for weeks. It never really took off. Considering the incredible buildup, it never did sell."

Stanley Loth, manager of

Brentano's in Washington, said on the other hand, "We're quite satisfied with the way the book is selling. There is no real way of knowing how many more we could have sold if there had been no discounting."

Louis Epstein, owner of a store in Hollywood, said he had expected to sell 2,500 or more copies, but had found only 600 or 700 buyers. "In no way does it match my expectations," he said.

Comments from stores in Massachusetts, President Kennedy's home state, ranged from, "The book is doing very well" to, "We didn't do what we expected with it."

From Dallas, scene of the assassination, there were conflicting returns.

"It's our No. 1 non-fiction book, outselling everything else at about 200 copies a week," said J. B. Albright, manager of the Cokesbury book store, which does a big mail order business.